

## **Holy Angels and St. Joseph Collaborative Report**

Dearest Parishioners,

As Pastor, I am supposed to make an annual report of each parish. There isn't any specific direction how this is to be done, and I've seen everything to extensive professionally published reports, simple verbal summaries, or quiet omission. I've chosen this format so that you can study, skim, or ignore it as you wish. I apologize for the delay, some information is only available later, and believe it or not, I'm not a huge fan of writing reports (nor do I have time). Due to the lateness of this experiment, I will probably try something else in the future.

### **Collaborative**

This year, I'm combining the reports with a specific intention: our two parishes form part of a single collaborative. Although each parish remains independent and has its own culture and identity which shouldn't be 'smushed' together, we are a collaborative, and have been long before "collaboratives" were established in the diocese in 2016. Fostering a collaborative spirit is something Bishop Bradley asked us at our Priest Convocation in the spring (2020's delayed convocation).

The collaborative structure means that while each parish remains independent, they are to share the ministry of the clergy, as well as share resources, and collaborate together to form a unified mission of furthering the Kingdom of Christ in this region of the Diocese of Kalamazoo. There aren't a lot of specific instructions given at the Diocesan level as to the way this should function in each collaborative, but rather some aspects for consideration for each collaborative.

As we move forward is something that we need to keep in mind, and we need to find creative, and sometimes challenging, means of meeting the needs of the people of our territories.

### **Survey Results:**

I realize that many have asked about the survey results. The immediate need of the spring survey was to evaluate the Mass schedule of our collaboratives and determine if any adjustments were needed or possible.

*I thought I had* mentioned in a general way the survey results, but as I went back to my notes, it turned out that I only mentioned the portion on confession. The rest, I said, was coming "in the future". I didn't plan to have it so far in the future! I sincerely apologize for that lapse, and I ask your pardon. That is undeniably my error. Please forgive my oversight.

The question at hand was whether we could avoid having one Spanish Mass under our responsibility in Sturgis (1:00 pm) at the same time as another in Bronson (1:30 pm). I was considering the possibility of moving the times earlier somehow to give some additional space. Ultimately, it seemed that any adjustment to the morning Masses would make Faith Formation times more burdensome to families at one or both parishes in the collaborative. Moving Masses closer together with less time between them becomes an intolerable burden on Fr.

Raul, Deacon Larry and myself when we have to rush between parishes already. I am aware that at both of our parishes there is a desire for one or the other of the Masses to be earlier. At this time, however, that is not possible. This current compromise helps us to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). I remain hopeful that some adjustment may be possible in the future, but this seems that this is something of the best arrangement for the time being.

We also noted a need, between the survey and the start of Faith Formation, to consider ways to expand our Faith Formation offerings. Currently we are not able to offer faith formation for all grades, and this is something that must be remedied. This will be the subject of discussion this year, and I’m certain that the survey data may play a part in that discernment.

The additional questions were for my own reference, and to provide a sounding board for everyone who wished to be heard. I specifically did not respond to comments because I don’t want to “explain away” someone’s concerns. I’ve seen far too often that an attempt to justify a decision has the result of making the person who expressed an idea or concern feel dismissed. For instance, one person said something like, “I think Fr. Andrew has a lot of meetings in Kalamazoo.” I could try to explain each one of them, or say I have more, or less than others, or give justifications, but the reality is in a certain respect, it may not matter to the person who felt it important enough to mention. I want to assure you that I read every comment, and whether I agree or not, I did seriously consider all of them, including considering how decisions are perceived.

### **Year of Holy Spirit, Transition**

As you may know, Bishop Bradley declared a Jubilee Year of the Holy Spirit. His stated intention is not so much to add “activities” but rather to implore the Holy Spirit’s guidance and power in our Diocese. As you know, Bishop Bradley turned 75 in 2020, and according to requirement, submitted his resignation. It is anyone’s guess when it will be accepted, and when a new bishop will be named (speculation is useless, so if anyone claims to know, they don’t know). In the meantime, we find ourselves celebrating 50 years of existence as a diocese, and now looking forward to this period of transition, it is logical that a people of faith will ask for the Spirit’s guidance. I ask you to keep our bishop and our diocese in prayer, and to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in this time of transition.

### **State of Parishes**

In Holy Angels, we were blessed to have a fruitful year of sacraments. Despite the shutdown, we were able to celebrate 26 baptisms, even though each had to be scheduled individually. We also had 103 first communicants, which was an outstanding number of first communicants, but that also includes the previous class, which was delayed due to the shutdown. The same holds true of our confirmed, of whom we had 101, across two different confirmation years. I was also privileged to be able to celebrate the sacrament of confirmation for the first group (2020), and to be present when the second group was confirmed by Bishop

Bradley in the newly renovated and re-consecrated cathedral. We received five adults into the Church, or completed their sacraments of initiation during the course of that year, and we celebrated 11 weddings. Finally, 18 of our parishioners passed away during the last fiscal year.

At St. Joseph, we had a smaller, but no less significant year. We celebrated a total of 4 baptisms, and 22 confirmations from our parish. In addition, only 4 children received their first communion. We had several adults in various stages of entrance into the church through RCIA, but no one was yet received into the church. The ongoing Covid pandemic caused many changes of plans. Regrettably we did not celebrate any weddings at St. Joseph this year, nor did anyone from our parish enter religious life or the priesthood. Perhaps we can work on changing those numbers in the coming years. Finally, 9 of our parishioners passed away in the last year.

## **Finance reports**

### **Holy Angels:**

I am indebted to the members of our Finance council for their support and counsel. They are: Richard Yesh (chair), Fr. Raúl Gómez, Gabriel Álvarez, Mary Scott, Jack Scheske, Rob LaBarge, and Scott Hopkins (parish council liaison).

### *Parish Income/Revenues*

Our 'ordinary' income which consists of Sunday and Holy Day contributions was down by 12.4%, or \$39,000. This was not unexpected due to the months of very limited in-person Mass attendance. We are already seeing an increase in giving and contributions as the year has continued, as people have felt safer, and as people have ventured out to try to embrace this "new normal" of life.

We had some "other parish income" (a general fund) which exceeded the budget by \$23,550. We also had investments which yielded positive returns, despite the sometimes-turbulent markets. We only budgeted \$5,000 but had a return of \$52,000. This is welcome, but not something we can count on each year.

In other income, we had some unexpected surprises. We had a few bequests and donations, which are always difficult to budget. We keep the budget low because it is not something we expect, but it is always appreciated. It is also something to remind us of as well: planned giving should be something we all think about. When we make our end-of-life arrangements, are we remembering the Church that nourishes us into Life eternal?

### *Parish Expenses*

We were able to keep our parish expenses down for the fiscal year. In fact, non-salaried expenses were under budget by \$53,600, or 52%. In large part, it was due to lack of in-person activities due to distancing restrictions and limits. Most expenses overall were under budget due to the reduced activity; plant operations 16.7% under; religious education costs 64%; benefits and liabilities 20%.

We have also tried to manage our spending. For instance, we haven't had to buy altar wine in over a year... But in other areas, we were able to make some savings as well, such as installing a

drinking water filter in the rectory which reduced our water costs by about half, and cancelling cable TV, and a few other small savings. We expect, and hope, that as we return to pre-pandemic activity levels our expenses will return as well.

### *Capital Outlay*

In terms of capital expenses, we did have a few expenses that brought us a little over budget. We had a little bit of remodeling, and the purchase of a new vehicle for the Sisters which were not budgeted, but also needed. As a result, we were about \$14,000 over budget in this area. We were able to recover about \$4,000 of the cost of the vehicle by selling the other two parish vehicles.

### *Net Profit/Loss*

The bottom line of our expenses gives us a surplus of \$163,000. This was unexpected, especially in light of the global situation, and was the result of some unexpected bequests, investment returns. We received a bequest in 2020 for the amount of \$66,000, a generous donation of \$20,000, and received our payment \$29,645 from our BAA campaign (which was a 50/50 split goal). All of these were put into savings, along with the remainder of the capital campaign fund, into the newly named Building and Grounds Fund.

### *Balance Sheet*

Financially, we are currently on solid ground. Our cash assets increased by \$161,000 compared to the end of the fiscal year 2020. Our total unrestricted funds between checking and savings totaled \$394,500. This gives us more than 6 months of expenses in cash, which has been a long term goal to provide stability to the parish.

I do need to also remind us all that this is not the time to “blow the budget.” With aging buildings, maintenance expenses continue to be ongoing. At the time that I am writing this report, we are dealing with the aftermath of some storm damage to the roof of the Parish Center, and looking at the age of the roof, we may have more extensive work needed than the simple repair, and this is likely to be a significantly costly project, likely up to \$100,000. The other three sections of the roof will also need attention within the next 10 years, so we will need to save in advance for these.

### **St. Joseph:**

At St. Joseph, the report is a little more simplified, because there aren't all the same elements in play as in Holy Angels. I will do my best to summarize.

In general, our assets were up at St. Joseph for the fiscal year 2020-21. We had a 7% gain in checking, and 29.6% in savings. While checking fluctuates throughout the year, the savings increase is due to a few factors. At the Diocesan/state level, our savings accounts are pooled into an investment fund, and despite the chaos and uncertainty of a few months, and the drastic drop in some areas, our conservative investments continued to do well overall. Additionally, we were able to tuck a small amount away that was returned from the previous year's Bishop's Annual Appeal, which as you recall, we were able to keep anything over 50% of

that goal. As a result, we received back \$6,966, which will be directed to the Building and Grounds Fund.

We reduced our income budget expectations by 25% the past year due to the Coronavirus pandemic and low attendance expectations. While we were able to exceed that reduced budget by a small amount in our envelope collection, our loose income was down significantly. We know that part of this reason is that due to the pandemic there was much less travel, and so many of our seasonal parishioners were not with us in as large numbers as usual.

We reduced our expense projections also in the past year as much as possible, and at the end of the year, we came out ahead by \$273. I consider that a pretty close break-even. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these numbers also include income from special donation funds which are set aside. When these two are subtracted out, we end up with an operations loss of \$6,372, even though the net result is a small gain.

The cause of some of our expenses were unexpected increases, such as the increase in janitorial/cleaning supplies and maintenance, although we were able to reduce that cost with our fancy (noisy!) blower, which paid for itself in one month. In the coming year, we will also have a few maintenance issues that will cost a bit of money, including the front stairway wall, and some of the air conditioning units.

### **Other little things:**

#### **Spanish ministry in St. Joseph**

A somewhat unique question has come up a few isolated times. As families move and grow, we have had requests for Spanish ministry or liturgies at St. Joseph. In general, I have avoided this. The reason is simple: we do not have the resources to duplicate efforts at multiple parishes. This is also why historically there have been only a few parishes that have been able to provide this ministry. With limited numbers of priests and ministers, we simply aren't able to spread out wider, and we will have to continue to centralize this ministry in Sturgis.

#### **"Family Nights"**

In September, we began our monthly "Family nights," a name that isn't exact for its purpose. The purpose overall is to reserve a night each month so that we have 'space' to accommodate some monthly event. Some of them are family nights, some are vocation dinners, some will be for couples, and so on. The idea is that we can shape the schedule so that we have a monthly opportunity for our communities. I want to reiterate that while most of these will be hosted at Holy Angels, they are always open to all of our parishioners of both parishes.

#### **Baptism Schedule**

Part of this arrangement comes with a change to a monthly baptism schedule at Holy Angels. This allows us to have regularly scheduled times for baptisms in both languages, without the struggles we had over the last year due to rescheduling so many other events. At St. Joseph, we will continue to schedule baptisms “as needed.”

### **Faith Formation**

Faith Formation resumed in person this year. I was very pleased to see so many families here, and it is always my joy to interact with the children as much as I can. We have a very fortunate challenge, in that we are having some struggles accommodating all of our students and families. This year, just as last year, we have a very large confirmation class, but we didn't have space or enough catechists for all of our needs. This is something that I intend to work on changing for the coming school year. Very likely this means that we will have to offer two nights for Faith Formation, and this will require significant adjustment on the part of many of us. I ask specifically for the assistance of additional catechists. Please consider helping us form our young people in the faith.

### **Mass Intentions**

A few parishioners have brought to my attention that it is sometimes difficult to schedule Mass intentions at certain Masses, a problem at both our parishes. On one hand, this is a wonderful problem to have: not all parishes have enough intentions for each of their Masses. On the other hand, this can be distressing for some people who wish to offer Masses for loved ones or intentions. If you have a significant number of Masses, please consider having some of them offered on weekdays or spread out so as to allow others to offer Masses as well. Remember that the Mass has infinite value, and even though there is only one stipend intention, the Mass is always offered for all of the intentions of the people and their needs. Also, please keep in mind that each Sunday and Holy Day we have one Mass offered for our parishioners and for their intentions.

### **Weapon and Drug Free Zone**

It has come to my attention that there have been some questions about the weapon policy at our parishes. The simple answer is that all parishes, schools, and other facilities of the Diocese of Kalamazoo are weapon-free zones. This is regardless of an individual's license. The only notable exception to this is an on or off-duty law enforcement officer. Therefore, I need to remind parishioners that it is not permitted to bring weapons of any kind to our church facilities. I realize this is not very palatable for some. I remind all that we follow an all-powerful God who “submitted, even to death, death on a cross.” I will also mention, that although the question hasn't come up yet, in order to avoid any future confusion: our facilities are drug-free zones also, and this applies also to marijuana.

### **Conclusion**

As we continue our mission of building the Kingdom of God, I ask for your continued prayers and support at both of our parishes. St. Paul depended on numerous people who were his *synergoi*, or “collaborators”: (See Rom 16:3, 16:9, Rom 16:21, 2 Cor 8:23). Here as well, the vineyard of Lord requires many workers. “I give thanks to my God” (1 Cor 1:4) for you all, and I count on you for your prayers and for your collaboration.